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JCCSF PRESENTS
A FIRST VOICE PRODUCTION

MU

The magical journey of a lonely hero and a Japanese mermaid

written and directed by BRENDA WONG AOKI
music by MARK IZU choreography by KIMI OKADA

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28
8:00 PM

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29
2:00 PM

Jewish Community Center *of* San Francisco

JCCSF PRESENTS
A FIRST VOICE PRODUCTION

MU

The magical journey of a lonely hero and a Japanese mermaid

written and directed by BRENDA WONG AOKI
music by MARK IZU choreography by KIMI OKADA

Artistic Vision

The idea for MU began with the waters of Mt. Fuji. In 2007, Mark, KK and I were living at the foot of Mt. Fuji while doing research on a U.S.- Japan Creative Artist Fellowship. People would come to visit us bringing empty gallon jugs, sheepishly asking if they could fill them up with our water. We learned later that the water at Mt. Fuji had a reputation for magical and medicinal powers. Those of you who follow my work know that I am fascinated with water, mermaids and the moon. Even at Mt. Fuji, it was all about the water!

Brenda Wong Aoki

During that same period, on a visit to the Aoki ancestral home, my research assistant got very excited about large, black round stones that were pitted with age and looked like ancient bowling balls to me. I learned that they were *maru ishi gami* (literally, round stone deities) left perhaps from the Jomon era, symbolizing fertility, protection and the oneness of all living things. That is also about the time that we learned about the stone formations that may be ancient pyramid structures below the waters around Yonaguni Island.

Those waters hold mysteries for me. I have always been fascinated by the tale of Urashima Taro and his journey to the Land of the Dragon King. Legend says that the land of the Dragon King and the sea in that area is called the Dragon's Triangle and has many attributes of the Bermuda Triangle. Drawing on the theme of female power, I have set this work in a place I call the Land of the Dragon Queen.

Finally, like the exquisite spiral of a seashell, my life continues to spiral in cycles. It was my kanreki this year; I turned 60 and that is a big deal if you are Japanese. It means that you have completed five cycles of the 12-animal zodiac and are ready to begin a new cycle. Mark, KK and I have been traveling performers for 20 years now -- ever since KK was born. Our son is now a young man, going to Stanford. He is beginning his own journey without us. I wanted to do one more piece with our little family and this is happening because our precious artist friends and colleagues have all joined in to help us. I wanted to do a work about the sea, about taking a moment to see the magic that is all around us. I wanted to do a work letting people know that nobody is really lost, and nobody is alone in the world. We just haven't completed the journey. We have forgotten that even a speck of sand is part of the beach, part of the earth, part of the universe.

UPCOMING EVENTS

PATRICIA RACETTE

DIVA ON DETOUR

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 4 • 8:00 PM

Fresh from her San Francisco Opera performances in *Mephistopheles*, multi-faceted superstar soprano Patricia Racette turns her attention to the Great American Songbook as she graces the Kanbar Hall stage for a delicious evening of Gershwin, Sondheim and Porter.

Presented in partnership with the San Francisco Opera.

ISABELLA ROSSELLINI

GREEN PORNO: LIVE ON STAGE

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 3 • 7:00 PM

Iconic actress and model Isabella Rossellini brings her provocative, critically-acclaimed short film series *Green Porno* to the stage. Dressed in n colorful costumes, she acts out the reproductive habits of marine animals and insects. Anchovies mate in orgies, shrimp strip down to get in the mood, starfish can do it two different ways. Originally airing on The Sundance Channel, *Green Porno* reveals the animal kingdom as you've never seen it before.

Limited tickets available for exclusive reception with Ms. Rossellini.

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FAMILY FUN!

CIRCUS BELLA

SUNDAY, JANUARY 26 • 11:00 AM & 2:00 PM

Kids of all ages thrill to the breathtaking aerialists, gravity-defying gymnasts and outrageous slapstick antics of San Francisco's own Circus Bella. A kaleidoscope of thrilling feats of balance and strength, grace and poise are accompanied by live music by Rob Reich.

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To inquire, please contact Matt Bissinger at 415.292.1220 or mbissinger@jccsf.org.

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Jewish Community Center of San Francisco in association with First Voice presents the World Premiere of

MU

Conceived and Created by Brenda Wong Aoki & Mark Izu with Kimi Okada
Written, Directed and Performed by Brenda Wong Aoki
Composed and Performed by Mark Izu
Choreographed by Kimi Okada
Costume Design by Debra Beaver Bauer
Lighting Design by Jack Carpenter
Produced by Jeff Rowlings

Brenda Wong Aoki – Storyteller

Dancers
(in alphabetical order)
Céline Alwyn-Parker
Marina Fukushima
Joseph Hernandez
Kai Kāne Aoki Izu
Dalmacio Payomo

Musicians
(in alphabetical order)
Shoko Hikage – koto, bass koto, vocals, percussion, movement
Yumi Ishihara – taiko, percussion, voice, movement
Mark Izu – bass, sho, sheng, voice, percussion, movement
Masaru Koga – alto and soprano sax, shakuhachi, flute, percussion, movement
Janet Koike – taiko, percussion, voice, movement
Akira Tana – drum set, voice, beat box, percussion, movement

MU is performed without intermission and runs about 70 minutes.

The commissioning & production of this world premiere is made possible by The Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation Composer Collaboration Awards 2010 initiative, Krannert Center for the Performing Arts/University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, National Endowment for the Arts, Rhythmix Cultural Works, and the Japan Foundation.

Additional funding and support for MU is provided by the California State Summer School for the Arts, Dramatist Guild, Grants for the Arts, San Francisco Arts Commission, Zellerbach Family Fund and individual donors.

ADDITIONAL MUSIC CREDITS
Additional Music by Brenda Wong Aoki and Janet Koike
Joy-Nah is a collaboration with Akira Tana & Shoko Hikage
Sawai Reflections is based on a composition by Tadao Sawai
Traditional Japanese Music:
Chidori no kyoku composed by Yoshizawa, Kengyo
Folk Songs:
Akita Ondo from Akita
Aizu Bandai-san from Fukushima
Soma Nagare-yama from Fukushima
Sanka by Tadao Sawai

FIRST VOICE CREDITS
Partnering Consultant – Brian Fisher
Dance Captain – Céline Alwyn-Parker
Stage Manager – Whitney Grace Krause
Lead Costume Construction – Joan Raymond and Keely Weiman
Milliners – Tiffany Amundson and Elizabeth Barley
Costume Stitchers – Angie Wilson, Emily White, Hoa Lam, Timothy Malko, Leslie Channel, Amanda Lee Angott, Karly Tufenkjian and Emily West
Hair and Make-up Design – Jenny Turjo-Lyon
Props Design – Kevin King
Sound Design – Scott Koue'
Sea Sheets – Lydia Tanji
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Oberlin Dance Collective
Rhythmix Cultural Works
Kevin King & Meridee Moore
Brett Metzger
Lenore Naxon for first saying "Yes."
MJ Bogatin
Nancy Ukai and Jim Russell
Brenda Way
Emiko Omori
Aislinn Scofield
Pam Higley
David Coffman

Mark would like to thank all the musicians for their collaborative effort in creating this production.
Kimi would like to give special thanks to the dancers and musicians for their creative input.

Contact:
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aokizu@firstvoice.org

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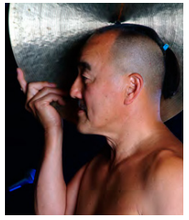
Skype calartistsdon
e don@calartists.com

Susan Endrizzi Morris
t 707-937-4787
c 415-302-1083
Skype sueendrizzi
e sue@calartists.com

Masaru Koga, *Musician and Movement*

Originally from Japan and currently based in San Francisco, saxophonist and flautist Masaru Koga has been an integral part of the creative music scene, known for his colorful, cross-cultural musical palette and innovative approach. He has traveled, recorded and performed nationally and internationally with Anthony Brown, Mark Izu, Hafez Modirzadeh, Royal Hartigan, Fred Ho, Kei Akagi, John-Carlos Perea, Wayne Wallace, Gail Dobson, and Kat Parra. From 2006 to 2011, Koga also served as the artistic director of SambAsia San Francisco, an award-winning community samba school that specializes in teaching and performing Brazilian Samba drumming but which also blends Brazilian Samba and Asian musical traditions. In 2010 he was awarded the Latin Jazz Flautist of the Year honor in a worldwide poll on Latin Jazz Corner.

Akira Tana, *Musician and Movement*



A self-taught drummer, Tana played semi-professionally while still in college at Harvard University from which he earned a BA in East Asian Studies and Sociology. He was a student at the New England Conservatory of Music and also studied privately with Vic Firth, jazz drummer Alan Dawson and percussionists in the Boston Symphony and the Boston Pops Orchestra. During this period, he had the opportunity to work with Helen Humes, Milt Jackson, Sonny Rollins, George Russell, Sonny Stitt and other leading jazz musicians. He also played with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and several of the classical music ensembles at the New England Conservatory. In the early 1980s, he continued to accompany major artists such as Al Cohn, Art Farmer, Benny Golson, Jim Hall, Jimmy Rowles, Zoot Sims and Cedar Walton. He also performed with artists outside the jazz world, including Charles Aznavour and Lena Horne. Tana recorded extensively during these years and in addition to making albums with some of the aforementioned musicians, also appeared with Ran Blake, Chris Connor, Carl Fontana, Jimmy Heath, Tete Montoliu, Spike Robinson and Warne Marsh. In the early 1990s, Tana worked with James Moody, Dizzy Gillespie, Frank Wess, Ray Bryant and J.J. Johnson, and the Manhattan Transfer, among others. With the bassist Rufus Reid he formed the band TanaReid and with Reid and Kei Akagi, the Asian American Jazz Trio. A technically accomplished drummer, Tana's wide range is hinted at by the musicians with whom he has worked. He is comfortable accompanying singers and doing instrumental ballads but also in his element playing hard bop. In the bands he co-leads with Reid he is known for his propulsive rhythmic drive. Tana also has produced and co-produced several albums including those by TanaReid, the Asian American Jazz trio and Project G-7. He has three recordings as a leader: "Secret Agent Men," "Moon Over the World" and "Kiss Kiss Bang Bang." His most recent project is a recording by his group, "Otonowa," which features jazz interpretations of enduring Japanese folk and pop melodies. This group completed a relief tour in March, 2013, of the areas of northern Japan that suffered from the 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

Dalmacio Payomo, *Dancer*

Dalmacio Payomo began his dance training at the ODC School in San Francisco at the age of 16. He also has trained at the California State Summer School of the Arts (CSSSA) in 2010 and at the Alonzo King LINES Ballet summer program in 2010 and 2011. Payomo has taught and performed with the Juntos Collective throughout the Bay Area and in Guatemala. Currently he is a junior in the Alonzo King LINES Ballet/Dominican University of California BFA program.

Yumi Ishihara, *Dancer*

Currently a member of Jun Daiko in Mountain View, California, Yumi developed her taiko skills as a performing member of San Jose Taiko, where she spent seven of her 18 years as a member of the artistic staff. Learning the art form of taiko led to teaching opportunities, international touring, as well as road managing Hanayui, and KODO. Memorable performances include Carnegie Hall with Ondeko-za; EXTASIA Japan music festival produced by Asano Taiko in Japan; and collaborative projects with Hanayui; members of KODO and Warabi-za; and Dr. Anthony Brown's Asian American Orchestra.

Shoko Hikage, *Musician and Movement*

Shoko Hikage began playing *koto* at the age of three. Her first teacher was Chizuga Kimura of the Ikuta-ryu Sokyoku Seigen Kai in Akita Prefecture, Japan. From 1985, she received special training from the 2nd and 3rd IEMOTO Seiga Adachi (hereditary head master of the Ikuta-ryu Sokyoku Seigen Kai). In 1988, Hikage graduated from Takasaki College with a major in koto music. She was then accepted as a special research student (*uchideshi*) in Sawai Sokyoku In (Sawai Koto Institute) under Tadao and Kazue Sawai, where she received her master's certificate (*kyoshi*). Hikage also completed a one-year intensive seminar at the Sawai Sokyoku In. In 1992, she moved to Honolulu, Hawaii, to teach koto at the Sawai Koto Kai Hawaii (Sawai Koto Institute, Hawaii branch) and at the University of Hawaii. There she held her first American solo recital at the Honolulu Academy of Arts Theatre as part of the New Music Across America Series. In 1997, she moved to San Francisco where she continues her concert and teaching activities. Hikage premiered Hyo-shin Na's "Crazy Horse" for Korean Traditional Orchestra and a koto solo with the National Orchestra of Traditional Instruments in Seoul, Korea, in November, 2011. In the Bay Area, she also premiered Hyo-shin Na's " Night Procession of the Hundred Demons", "Koto Music" and "Koto Ninano."

Janet Koike, *Musician and Movement*

Janet Koike began her taiko training at the San Francisco Taiko Dojo. After touring Indonesia with Keith Terry's *Body Tjak*, she became part of San Jose Taiko's Artistic Staff. Her compositions are part of SJT, Emeryville Taiko, Moab Taiko and Odaiko New England's repertoire. Janet is the Artistic Director of Maze Daiko, a group known for pioneering the mixing (maze) of global instrumentation and grooves with the physical elegance of taiko. Maze has collaborated with Kodo artists Yoko Fujimoto, Chieko Kojima and Kaoru Watanabe. As a solo taiko artist, Koike performs with First Voice, Mark Izu Ensemble, Anthony Brown's Asian Jazz Orchestra, Theatre Yugen, and D'Cuckoo. She has taught workshops at the Portsmouth Percussive Dance Festival, Born to Drum, the North American Taiko Conference and Earth Celebration on Sado Island. In 2007 Koike founded Rhythmix Cultural Works, a community art center in Alameda, California, to bring people together through creativity, community and cultural exchange.

About MU

The Chinese character for "mu"

MU is an archetypal hero's journey. It is the tale of a lonely young man who is walking along the streets of San Francisco, deep into the music on his mobile device, when he is suddenly pulled into the ocean. He saves a beautiful mermaid and is rewarded with a journey to the Palace of the Dragon Queen at the bottom of the sea. But poison from the Land Above threatens her kingdom and the young man must fight this or the mermaid will die. The young man learns that all is connected — there is only one ocean and one world.

MU was inspired by both the Zen concept of MU and the mysterious underwater pyramids off of Yonaguni, Japan, thought to be the remnants of the lost continent of MU, the Motherland of the Sun that flourished in peace before the dawn of time.

Notes

The Storyteller tells the story and is the voice for other characters. MU is a Zen concept meaning nothing, before words, awareness. It is about non-duality. The ancient Chinese character for MU was a person with outstretched arms and originally meant dance or dancer. A dancer is Spirit manifested. Chi, the life force, is manifested through breath.

Characters

KK	A young man and the hero of this tale
The Sea Princess	A Mermaid and KK's Sweetheart
The Dragon Queen	Goddess of the Sea
Sea Horse	Very Pregnant Widower
Sea People	Shape-shifting dancers
Jelly Fish Girls	Shape-shifting musician/dancers
Guardian of the Deep	Big monster played by many people
Red-tipped Worms	Giant worms played by many people
Street Philosophers	Musicians in the Land Above
The Sea Sages	Musicians in the Deep Blue Sea

MU Concepts

Effort has been made in the writing of MU to convey the story with as few words as possible. Priority has been given to movement and music. Contemporary dance is the main vehicle for delivering the action. Elements of nohgaku and gagaku are also utilized. The cast is comprised of creative artists who are comfortable working collaboratively with the same intent. The score is both composed and improvised — the music adjusting, within limits, to each performance.

The Musicians are on stage throughout the performance and are often involved in the action.

The Waki
In Nohgaku, the Waki is the audience's eye on stage
In MU, the Storyteller performs as the *Waki*.

Kurogos are stage assistants who are in full view of the audience but are understood as being invisible.

Michiyuki is a specific floor pattern that signifies a journey through time and space.

Mah signifies the sound of silence and the movement in stillness.

Jo, Ha, Kyu
A concept that began with gagaku and was incorporated into all Japanese arts including the martial. It is the idea of an eternal source of energy that constantly evolves to create life. *Jo* is the beginning stillness, in *Ha* there is a building of tension, *Kyu* is rushing to the climax. Every play has a jo-ha-kyu, every dance, every character, ever line, every note played, every movement. It is a way to deepen an artist's performance.

Kyogen Mime & Gesture are archetypal gestures for the basic life experiences of humans: Loving, crying, eating, drinking, fighting, and dying.

Inspirations for MU

Urashima Taro, an ancient Japanese folktale in which a kind fisherman rescues a turtle and is rewarded with a visit to the underwater palace of the Dragon God. The fisherman stays three days, but when he returns to his home, 300 years have gone by.

The Dragon Kingdom is the imagined underwater analogue to the *Ryukyu* (nine dragons) independent kingdom (1429 - 1879), now the Okinawa archipelago. Yonaguni is situated in the waters off Okinawa. The Dragon's triangle, also known as the Devil's Sea, is a Pacific region which is drawn into the tale of MU. Ships have been known to disappear in this area. It is a volcanically active area. Popular legends that date back centuries tell of dragons that lived off the coast of Japan, disrupting its waters.

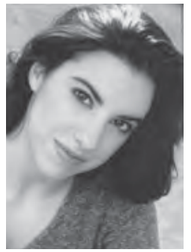
Magatama, an ancient bead-like ornament that entered Japan from Korea around 300 - 400 A.D. Its shape has been said to symbolize an animal tusk, connoting good luck in hunting; the Korean diagram representing a woman's womb suggesting fertility; and the Taoist symbol representing the indivisible whole of yin and yang. In MU it can also be thought of as the embryo of a mermaid.

Kai (ocean) is the word in Japanese for ocean or sea and it is also the name we gave our son Kai Kāne, suggested by a shaman in Hawaii when his birth faced complications. KK has grown into a strong dancer and inexplicably sea animals have always come to him when we are at the beach.

Mammalian diving reflex
A diving reflex in mammals which optimizes respiration, triggered by facial contact with cold water. The human heart rate slows down 10 to 25 percent, reducing the need for bloodstream oxygen.

Jomon culture (13,000 B.C.- 300 B.C.)
The prehistoric period in Japan known for having produced some of the world's earliest pottery. *Jomon* mean "cord marks," after the way cords were pressed into the surface of wet clay. "As in all Neolithic cultures, women produced these early potteries." (Metroplitan Museum of Art, http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/jomo/hd_jomo.htm). *Dogu* are strong, robust humanoid figures made of clay during the *Jomon* that may represent goddesses.

Céline Alwyn-Parker, *Dancer and Dance Captain*



A native of San Francisco, Céline Alwyn Parker has been performing and teaching dance nationally and internationally for the last 10 years. She earned an M.A. in Contemporary Dance from the London Contemporary Dance School in 2008 and while living in the U.K., worked with choreographers Rui Horta, Garry Stewart, David Massingham, and Ben Duke. Prior to returning to the U.S., she toured with Cirque du Soleil's *Dralion* playing the role of 'Oceane'. Earlier in her career performed on Broadway in the musical *Bombay Dreams*. More recently, she has worked with local choreographers Katie Faulkner, Rachael Lincoln, Amelia Rudolph, Jo Kreiter and Christy Funsch. In 2012, Céline received an Isadora Duncan Award for dancing in the collaborative work *Terra Incognita: Revisited*. In addition to performing, she is a dedicated dance educator and teaches creative movement, improvisation and contemporary dance to students of all ages in schools and studios in the Bay Area.

Marina Fukushima, *Dancer*

Marina Fukushima was born in Tokyo, Japan, and is a dancer, teacher and choreographer based in San Francisco. She came to the United States when she was 15 years old to study dance under the direction of Bonnie Mathis in Minneapolis, MN. She earned a BFA in Dance with honors from Butler University in Indiana and completed a teaching assistant position at the University of Iowa for her MFA in Dance. She has danced with Anne Bluethenthal and Dancers; Epiphany Productions; KUNST-STOFF; Mark Foehringer Dance Project; ODC; project agora; and toured across the U.S. and internationally in Germany, Peru and Greece. She has had the pleasure of working with choreographers Christine Bonansea, Kim Epifano, Catharine Galasso, Jo Kreiter, Lenora Lee and Nol Somonse. Marina has taught at Alonzo King LINES Dance Center; ODC; Dance Mission; Roco Dance; and was invited to teach as a guest teacher at Cornell University and Dance New Amsterdam in New York. Her work was presented at the American College Dance Festival; KUNST-STOFF arts; ODC Theater; Project Artaud; The Garage; and 418 Dance Project. In August, 2012, she created choreography for the motion picture, *Brujo*, directed by Glen Mack in which she also performed as an actor and dancer.

Kai Kāne Aoki Izu, *Dancer*

Kai Kāne Aoki Izu is a sophomore at Stanford University working toward a double major in Psychology and Human Biology. He is passionate about dance and has appeared nationally and internationally on stages in Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore and Australia. Kai Kāne began his formal dance training at the ODC School in San Francisco at the age of sixteen. He trained at both the California State Summer School for the Arts (CSSSA) and the Alonzo King LINES Ballet Summer Program in 2010 and 2011. He is a QuestBridge scholar and ScholarMatch recipient. Kai Kāne is interested in rehabilitation sciences and hopes to use his experience as a dancer to further research the field of the mind-body connection. He is currently pursuing an internship with ODC that will help youth reach higher education through dance.

Joseph Hernandez*, *Dancer*

Joseph Hernandez, from Rolling Meadows, IL, began dancing at the age of 16 at Rolling Meadows High School. He recently graduated Cum Laude from Western Michigan University, where he earned a B.F.A. in Dance. Joseph has attended summer programs with the San Francisco Conservatory of Dance, ODC/Dance, Garrett + Moulton Productions, River North Dance Chicago, Luna Negra Dance Theater, and the Giordano Dance Center. He has had the opportunity to perform principal roles in David Parsons' *The Envelope* and Gerald Arpino's *Viva Vivaldi*, as well as works by KT Nelson, Alex Ketley, and Frank Chaves among others. Joseph has previously performed with River North Dance Chicago, Wellspring/Cori Terry & Dancers, and recently joined ODC/Dance as an apprentice for their 2013/2014 season.

*Performing courtesy of ODC/Dance.

Debra Beaver Bauer, *Costume Designer*

Debra Beaver Bauer is a Bay Area Costume Designer, and is excited to collaborate with Brenda Wong Aoki, Mark Izu and Kimi Okada. She has designed numerous Productions for Berkeley Repertory Theatre, American Conservatory Theater, California Shakespeare Theater, The Magic Theatre and Theatre Works. Her work has also taken her to Washington, D.C. and New York City. She has been the Resident Designer for Teatro Zinzanni and her circus roots have taken her to Russia and Japan. Ms. Bauer is also fond of designing for dance, including San Francisco Ballet, Margaret Jenkins, Skating Productions for NBC and various arenas around the country. She also admits to a few large scale floor shows in Las Vegas. She is currently working on the upcoming "Vanya & Sonia & Masha & Spike" at the Berkeley Repertory Theatre.

Jack Carpenter, *Lighting Designer*

Jack Carpenter designs lighting and scenery for dance, music, theater, museum exhibits and opera. His work can be seen with the Bishop Museum, the Oakland Museum of California, the Exploratorium, San Francisco Ballet, S.F. Symphony, Detroit Symphony, Diablo Ballet, Kronos Quartet, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Oakland Ballet, Joe Goode Performance Group, ODC/SF, Zaccho Dance Theatre, Project Bandaloop and Eureka Theatre. His work has been in Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, Davies Symphony Hall, Macau, and Honolulu. Notable productions for Carpenter include design and direction for Inspired By America for Cypress String Quartet, the world premiere of *Angels In America*, for the Eureka Theater Company; *Ghost Architecture*; *Invisible Wings* and *Arrival and Departure* for Zaccho Dance Theatre; *Harboring*, *Interiors and Bound(less)*, for Project Bandaloop; *Beauty Queen of Leenane* for Berkeley Repertory Theatre; *Sightings and Thirsting* for Oakland Ballet; *Traveling Light* and *Rambler*, for Joe Goode Performance Group; *Concerto Romantique* for San Francisco Ballet; and *MLADA* for SF Symphony. Carpenter has received four Bay Area Critics Circle Awards, and five Isadora Duncan Awards, and is currently the Production Manager of the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival.

Jeff Rowlings, *Producer/ Production Manager*

Jeff Rowlings is a longtime San Francisco-based theatrical producer, production manager and designer. He was Production Manager for American Conservatory Theater (2001-2012), San Diego Repertory Theatre (1996-1998) and Magic Theatre (1985-1995). He has designed sets and lights in San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego and co-founded Foghouse Productions, an independent commercial production company. Foghouse produced Culture Clash Anthology which ran in S.F. and L.A. and the hugely successful and award-winning R. Buckminster Fuller: The History (and Mystery) of the Universe in Chicago, Seattle and three runs in San Francisco. He is also producing the world premiere of The Pornographers' Daughter, a solo show written and performed by Liberty Mitchell at the "Z Below" in January, 2014.

Whitney Krause, *Stage Manager*

Whitney Krause most recently worked as a Production Assistant on Pericles, Prince of Tyre and Troublemaker at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. She has also worked as a Production Assistant at California Shakespeare Theater, Marin Theatre Company, American Conservatory Theater, Aurora Theatre Company and as a Stage Manager at Opera Academy of California, A.C.T. Conservatory, Boxcar Theatre, The Western Stage and Summer Repertory Theatre. Whitney is a graduate of California State University, Chico.

Colin Suemnicht, *Production Assistant*

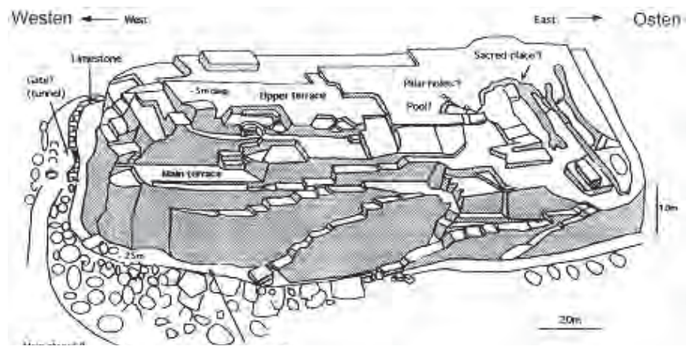
Colin Suemnicht has served as the Technical Director of Three Sisters as well as the Assistant Technical Director of Avenue Q, Lucky Stiff and Dog Sees God at Southern Oregon University. He has also worked at A.C.T. Conservatory, Marin Theatre Company, California Shakespeare Theater, Summer Repertory Theatre and Boxcar Theatre as a Scenic Carpenter. He has just finished working as the technical director and Lighting Designer for Opera Academy of California's summer program. Colin has a Bachelors of Science degree in Theatre Arts from Southern Oregon University.

The Lost Kingdom of Yonaguni

During the last ice age, Yonaguni was part of the Chinese mainland. In the 12th century, it was part of the Ryukyu (Dragon) Kingdom. In the 17th century, it was incorporated into the Japanese han of Satsuma. By 1879, the island was formally part of Japan.

Until the early 20th century, Yonaguni was part of the larger Yaeyama village, which included the neighboring Yaeyama Islands. In 1948, it became an independent village. From 1945 to 1972, it was occupied by the United States and was then returned to Japan to form a part of Okinawa Prefecture.

Later, in 1996, Professor Masaaki Kimura , a professor at the University of the Ryukyus, began to survey the structure. While Kimura maintains that the site is evidence for an advanced prehistoric civilization, others argued that the structure was the result of natural phenomena. Research in the ensuing years has arrived at a consensus that the structure is indeed a man-made monolith carved from a natural formation. The Monument consists of medium to very fine sandstones and mudstones deposited about 20 million years ago. Most of the significant Yonaguni formations seem to be carved from one underlying rock mass. The flat parallel faces, sharp edges, the right and precise obtuse angles of the formation would indicate that the monolith was carved by man.



credit: excerpts and images from the Faram Research Foundation

Music of MU

What is the sound of sea horses waltzing? Of a young hero falling in love with a beautiful mermaid? Of his underwater clash against the cloudy pollutants, an army of red-tipped worms?

Unlike the soundtracks of movies, which are ultra real and in which sounds are enhanced so that the effects are scarier and bigger -- "it doesn't sound real, but you understand what it is" -- the score for MU, written by Emmy®-award winning composer Mark Izu, lifts off from his handwritten graphic notation, a melding of his love of jazz and ancient Japanese music, and the live improvisation of musicians who have worked together for years.

"The ensemble performance only happens once," he says.

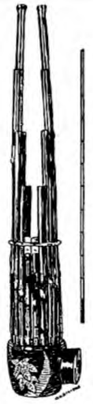
"It's an incredible ensemble of musicians and instruments so we want to use them and let the audience hear these sounds and imagine the ocean. Then you're in an imaginary state all night."

On stage, six musicians play more than a dozen instruments. These include Izu playing the *sho*, an ancient Japanese court instrument which has 17 pipes and 15 reeds, and requires strong lungs to produce its haunting, atonal notes. The score also calls for three types of Japanese drum, a 13- and a 17-string *koto*, the *shakuhachi* bamboo flute and four Western instruments: the double bass, trap drums, saxophone and flute.

Percussive sounds emit from a thumb piano, a beaded gourd, a Chinese opera gong filled with ball bearings and handcrafted drum mallets which, when rubbed on drums and *koto* strings, create a sad cry that strikes Izu as the sound of a whale crying.

In addition to being an acclaimed performer, composer and the pioneer of Asian Jazz, Izu has devoted more than 30 years to studying the *sho*, a reed instrument used in *gagaku*, the Japanese court music tradition that was introduced into Japan from China and Korea in the 7th century.

Izu studied gagaku under Togi Suenobu, a Japanese court musician who began training when he was seven years old. Togi was born into a family that had been part of the *gagaku* lineage for 1,400 years within Japan's Imperial Household, but he left Japan in order to teach it in the United States, where Izu studied with him from the mid-1970s.



Mark Izu

It is a rare opportunity to hear *sho* music played live because so few people have studied the instrument. The fact that Izu melds his mastery of the form with other instruments on a Western stage is doubly special.

The beloved Japanese teacher's methods are now his own, combined with Izu's thoughtful and simultaneously improvisational bent. "One of the first pieces I did for MU was scribbled in shorthand. I didn't put it into the computer. It's hard to write non-Western notes in computer software. I like to write it out longhand."

"If you write big, bold scratchy marks on the paper, this means a screeching sound. An arrow that points up means high, and if it's pointing down, that means something you play in a low register. If it's linear, like five or six inches long, just follow it along. Play this for 10 seconds and see how it travels through time and space."

These "soundscapes" create ambient moods but also act as voices for characters in MU. An African thumb piano which had been his mother's, has untuned keys which make a buzzing sound. "When you hear that instrument, that's the mermaid," he says. "It's her voice. It's not necessarily harmonious and beautiful but it's atonal. It fits the different moods of a mermaid."

A sweet love lament is played in a flute and koto arrangement, which evokes a siren's harp. When the young boy is sent to help save the ocean, *okero* drums that are tightened by rope and carried on the body suggest a martial mission. The conflict between the haves and the have-nots is underlined by the driving rhythm of the large taiko festival drums played by Janet Koike and Yumi Ishihara and punctuated by the polka-like beat that rips from Masaru Koga's alto sax.

Mark Izu, *Composer*

Composer, producer and bandleader Mark Izu has fused the traditional music of Asia with African-American improvisation. Izu plays acoustic bass as well as several traditional Asian instruments such as the *sheng* (Chinese multi-reed instrument) and *sho* (Japanese multi-reed instrument).

As the Artistic Director of the Asian American Jazz Festival for 15 years, Izu has gained national and international attention for developing a new musical genre, Asian American Jazz, and has performed with artists such as James Newton, Steve Lacy, Zakir Hussain, Kent Nagano, George Lewis, Cecil Taylor, Anthony Brown and Jon Jang. Recently Izu has been inducted into the Grove Dictionary of Music as a composer and founder of Asian American Jazz.

Izu has composed scores for film, live music concerts and theater. In 2009 Izu won an Emmy®Award for Outstanding Music for his score in *Bolinao 52*. His film scores include Steven Okazaki's Academy® award-winning Days of Waiting; Emmy-winning documentary, *Return to the Valley*; and a new score for the DVD release of Sessue Hayakawa's 1909 masterpiece, *The Dragon Painter* (Milestones DVD - 2007). His theater scores have been performed at the Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, and Sundance Festival and he was awarded a Drama-logue Award for Best Original Music & two Indie Awards for best CD. His recordings include *The Queen's Garden* (Indie Award 1999), *Tales of the Pacific Rim* (Indie Award 1990), *Circle of Fire* (Top 10 picks of the year, SF Bay Guardian), and recordings with the Grammy-nominated Asian American Orchestra. Izu's CD *Threading Time* featuring masters Togi Suenobu (gagaku) and Zakir Hussain (tabla) was released in Tokyo in 2007.

Izu's other awards include Meet the Composer, Asian Business League Artist Award, Rockefeller MAP, National Endowment for the Arts, and San Francisco Arts Commission. Izu was a founding faculty member of Stanford's Institute of Diversity for the Arts in 2002. In 2007 he received the US/Japan Creative Arts Fellowship to Japan sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Bunkacho.

Kimi Okada, *Choreographer*

Kimi Okada is the Associate Choreographer and a founding member of ODC Dance for which she has choreographed more than 25 original works. Her work also includes commissions and collaborations with Geoff Hoyle, Bill Irwin, Julie Taymor, and Robin Williams. She has choreographed productions for the American Conservatory Theater/ San Francisco, Yale Repertory Theater, The New Victory Theater in New York, The Children's Theater Company in Minneapolis, Theatre for a New Audience in New York, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, The American Music Theater Festival, The Santa Fe Opera, Los Angeles Music Center Opera, Los Angeles Theatre Center, The Pickle Family Circus, and the San Francisco Mime Troupe. She was nominated for a Tony award for the Broadway production of Largely New York, which she co- choreographed with Bill Irwin. In 2010 she choreographed the ACT production of Scapin, and The Composer is Dead at Berkeley Repertory Theater. Since 1996, Okada has served as Director of the ODC School, which she has brought to the forefront of international and national dance education for youth and adults.

Artists of MU

Brenda Wong Aoki, *Playwright and Director*

Brenda Wong Aoki is a playwright and performer. Her song/dance/dramas are drawn from her grandfather's memories of San Francisco during the Great Earthquake, Kabuki legends and personal experience. Known for her agility across disciplines, she creates monodramas for symphony, dance, solo performance, taiko and jazz ensembles. Her teachers, Living Treasure Nomura Masaku, Yuriko Doi and her long time director and coach, Jael Weisman, inspire her work.

Aoki's plays have been produced worldwide and include: *Mermaid* (1997), Torrance and Berkeley symphonies, commissioned by Kent Nagano; Kuan-yin: *Our Lady of Compassion* (2002), Hong Kong Cultural Center, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, the Esplanade in Singapore, directed by Shu Wing Tang and featured *gagaku* master Togi Suenobu; No Way Out, Jefferson Starship Best Music Video of the Year; *Uncle Gunjiro's Girlfriend* (1998, 2002, 2007), originally directed by Diane Rodriguez with dramaturgical support from Luis Alfaro, Joan Shirle and Joan Holden and which was developed with the San Jose Repertory Theatre, the Dell Arte Players Company and was the American representative to the Adelaide International Festival in Australia. It is featured in the KTVU documentary San Francisco in the 1920's. Other works include: *The Queen's Garden* (1992, 2011), Climate Theater and San Diego Repertory Theater and was published in *Contemporary Plays by Women of Color* (Routledge Press, London); *Obake: Tales of Spirits Past and Present* (1998, 2005), was presented at the Kennedy Center and on Broadway at the New Victory Theater; *Random Acts*, Dallas Theater Center, directed by Amy Mueller and toured nationally. Aoki wrote the musical works: *The Soul of the Great Bell* (1985), San Jose Taiko; *Legend of Morning Glory*, a story given to Aoki by Pete Seeger (2009); and *Maze Daiko* for Taiko ensemble. Return of the Sun (2009) Palace of Fine Arts, San Francisco was commissioned by the Ethnic Dance Festival and was a work Aoki and Izu created for dance ensembles from Korea, India, Peru and Mexico. Aoki and Izu's Kabuki Cabarets (2010, 2011) have been presented at the San Jose Jazz Festival, Kuumbwa, and Yoshi's, San Francisco.

One of America's premiere storytellers, Aoki performs regularly at the National Storytelling Festival In Jonesborough TN. She is the featured storyteller in *Oral Tradition Through Time*, Houghton Mifflin/ McDougal-Littell. Brenda's book, *Mermaid Meat the Secret to Immortality* was published in 2009. Her monodramas are included in the book *Extreme Exposure* (Theater Communications Group, New York 2000) edited by Jo Bonney. She has recorded with Anthony Brown, Christopher Yohmei Blaisdel and Basque composer, Kepa Junkera.

A curriculum developer and educator, Aoki is a founding faculty member of the Institute for Diversity in the Arts at Stanford University and has been an artist in residence at such institutions as the Smithsonian, Duke University, Kenyon College, Wesleyan, Oberlin College, International House, Tokyo, and Sapporo University. Her plays are archived at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She is a member of ASCAP and the Dramatist Guild. She is the co-founder and artistic director of First Voice.

In 2013, Aoki received the Inspirational Leadership in the Performing Arts award from San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee. She has been awarded a U.S.-Japan Creative Artist Fellowship, two NEA Solo Theater Fellowships, ASCAP Plus Awards, Critic's Circle Award, four Hollywood Drama-logue awards and two INDIE Awards for Best Spoken Word recordings. Her work has been commissioned by the U.S. Congressional Civil Liberties Public Education Fund, the Dramatist Guild, the Asian Arts Council, the Japan Foundation, the MAP Fund, San Francisco Arts Commission, the California Arts Council, the Zellerbach Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Brenda has deep roots in San Francisco. Her grandfather was a founder of Japantown in the 1890s, and her grandmother was a leader of the first Chinatown garment union. She lives in San Francisco with her husband, Mark Izu and son, Kai Kāne Aoki Izu.

Voice is another instrument, used as a "human beat box" when Akira Tana makes DJ-like popping sounds with his mouth into the microphone. "It's like a drum machine, but you do it with your voice," Izu says. Virtuoso koto musician Shoko Hikage, who also is trained in Japanese ritual music and folk ballads, does a rap in Akita dialect with Tana's beat box.

It is not surprising to learn that Izu listens to world music more than anything else when he's not making it. In his playlist that means Tuvan throat music, Coltrane, Bartok's string quartets and Takemitsu.

Izu also composes for film. He won an Emmy in 2009 for his score in Bolinao 52, a documentary about Vietnamese boat people. He also has served for many years as the artistic director of the Asian American Jazz Festival and taught at Stanford University's Institute for Diversity in the Arts. In 2013, his contributions were recognized by San Francisco Board of Supervisors with a Certificate of Honor.

Conversation inevitably circles back to Togi sensei, who eventually returned to Tokyo and found to his surprise that young Japanese were interested in learning *gagaku* music thanks to the popularity of a muzak-like song on the radio that was inspired by *gagaku*. (Because only sons qualify, Togi's two daughters were prohibited from becoming part of the musical lineage of the Imperial Household; one became a successful classical pianist based in Berlin).

Izu, who was in Japan on a grant, came to realize that the authentic way to learn *gagaku* is to master dance forms and memorize melodies before studying the musical instruments. This intensive learning process internalizes the repertoire in the body.

He then recalled the time that Togi's American students couldn't understand why they were not allowed to practice one particular measure that they were struggling with. Togi sensei made them start from the beginning of the score each time. "Togi sensei would say, 'let's start from the beginning,' and then it would fall apart in the middle" where the troublesome measure was. "He would shake his head and make us get through the whole piece. Finally, one day, he said, 'you know why? Because we're not learning a measure at a time, we're learning the whole piece.'"

The students never complained again. This is how you learn: mastery of the medium and complete, perhaps lifelong, immersion in the tradition, for one never knows when a moment of awakening will occur. One day, when the American *gagaku* students were hanging loose during a lesson, they asked him, "Sensei, why did you come to America?"

He told them about the time he was playing a gig, the cello in a Western pit orchestra. Japanese court musicians are also trained in Western instruments and permitted to do outside work. Togi came to an eight-measure rest and paused but the rest turned into what seemed like a week. After the rest in the score, Togi played his part, put down his bow and decided to leave Japan. He traveled across the sea to another country, gathering a following behind him who have been led to writing, performing, composing and even to oceans of deep, haunting and finally unknowable sounds.

http://www.ksanti.net/free-reed/history/sho.html

Book on *gagaku* music: *Music of a Thousand Autumns* http://aris.ss.uci.edu/rgarfias/bio-research/music-of-a-thousand-autumns-sm.pdf

Movement of MU

Kimi Okada

All of us have experienced the weightlessness in water that choreographer Kimi Okada strives to capture onstage: before birth, we floated in amniotic fluid. Perhaps there also are indelible memories of learning to swim or stroking vigorously through ocean currents. But Okada takes viewers deeper into the playful underwater world of weightlessness where there is splendor amid the seaweed, sea horses who court in the deep, and creatures who circle one another in a stately renaissance pavane on the ocean floor.

"In a dance/music/theater production like this, you don't want movement for movement's sake. There always has to be a reason for moving, to tell a story that has a kind of power and impact the way music and script does," she says. "It's abstract, and as a viewer, you bring your own interpretation to what is happening. If something lingers and stays with you, it has to do with a truth that you feel: 'I know this. I have felt this before.' That's the connection we're trying to make."

Okada, a founding member and Associate Choreographer for ODC/ Dance is a Tony-nominated choreographer who has also collaborated with Robin Williams, Julie Taymor, Geoff Hoyle and Bill Irwin. She also has worked with the San Francisco Mime Troupe, the Pickle Family Circus and the Santa Fe Opera and numerous theater companies including ACT, Berkeley Repertory Theater, and Seattle Repertory Theater.

MU draws on her years of artistic work as well as her nearly 20 years' experience as director of the ODC School in San Francisco where she has worked in various capacities with the five dancers in MU whom she selected for their artistry in contemporary dance, jazz, hiphop and ballet. Their combined dance experience includes Broadway, Cirque du Soleil and in the case of KK, who plays the young hero, an undergraduate in the dance program at Stanford University.

The fact that MU features a family of performers in Aoki, Izu and their son KK, surrounded by an extended family of musicians and artists, many of whom have worked together for years, contributes to the cast's instinctive closeness. Indeed, Okada directed KK and Macio Payomo when they were members of ODC's teen company, the ODC Dance Jam, and says that it's "thrilling" to work with them again as they come into their own as young men and dancers.

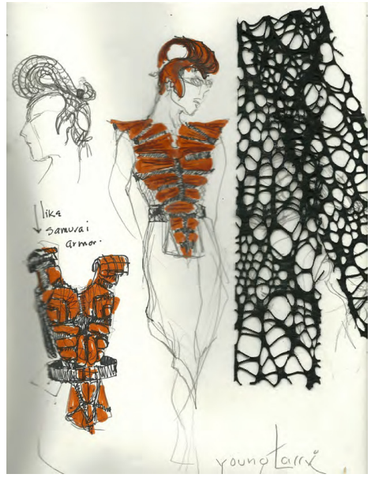
All the dancers are skilled in ensemble and partnering work which Okada uses in MU to create a feeling of fluidity and buoyancy. "We have experimented to get the feeling of what water does to the body: the feeling of swell and swirl and ripple and not having to fight gravity. The dancers lift each other to create a feeling of weightlessness. We love partnering. It's exciting and beautiful and captures the many properties of water", she says.

Okada's challenge has been to find a movement lexicon for MU. "It's not like a script where words are on a page," she says. The movement language draws from contemporary dance but also uses pedestrian movement, physical comedy, *Nihon Buyo* (Japanese Classical Dance) and a gestural vocabulary that is theatrical.

"The three elements of dance, theater and music are very strong partners," she says. There are five dancers, a storyteller/narrator, and six musicians in MU, and all interact dynamically on the stage. The fact that MU features live music, with the musicians onstage, and not in an orchestra pit, adds to the energy. "It picks up the both the musicians' and dancers' energy to have the proximity. To have the musicians slip into dance roles is unusual and makes them part of the action."

Costumes of MU

Deborah Beaver Bauer



The sea horse is an exoskeletal creature. They're spiny and hard so I wanted to do something that felt skeletal on the outside but that also felt Japanese. I also needed to do something that the dancers could put on quickly. It opens up and fits over the head almost like a sandwich board (right).

I love fable and folk tale. I love fantasy. When I was young, I always wanted to be a horse. I never wanted to be a human so anything with the natural world is my strong suit. And I've always loved Asian theater and dance.

To see the torso is a strong signifier for the audience. That's where the transition happens from human to fish. We have a young dancer who will be lifted and rolling around so we can't put her in a skirt. We're working on a pair of pants that are probably going to be asheer fabric with a gold sheen (right).

The red tipped worms eat the oil slick so I didn't want them to be funny because they perform this wonderful function. They are tall, tubular shaped creatures with long red tentacles on their fingers. The dancers use them in a metaphoric way to grab and eat the oil.